



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES & PUBLIC PROTECTION  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

February 14, 2023  
Public Safety Committee Testimony

Good afternoon Senator Gaston, Representative Boyd and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 5496- An Act Concerning Photographic and Videographic Special Effects. The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) opposes HB 5496.

This proposed bill seeks "To allow for the sale, purchase and use of photographic and videographic special effect smoke bombs in this state."

Smoke Bombs are pyrotechnic devices and are classified as 1.4g, Class "C" consumer grade fireworks that are currently prohibited in the State of Connecticut as defined on C.G.S. 29-357.

Smoke Bombs, when used, create sufficient heat to ignite combustible materials, and the devices retain heat for a significant period of time following discharge. Warnings on the devices indicate "EXTREMELY HOT" and advise the user to "Wait 10 minutes after use before handling." Disposal instructions indicate "Before disposing, submerge discharged product in water for 24 hours in a secure area." Smoke Bombs are flammable and should not be used, per manufacturer instructions, by anyone under the age of 18.

Smoke Bombs have been the documented cause of several fires due to their use and disposal. Most notably, authorities determined that the El Dorado wildfire in San Bernardino County, California on September 5, 2020, was caused by the use of a smoke bomb during a gender reveal party. Private citizens discharged the smoke bomb and a fire resulted, burning more than 22,000 acres of forest, damaging homes, and killing a firefighter who was battling the fire.

Another example closer to home in Bethany: a fire scene in 2016 was caused by the use of a smoke bomb, later observed via a burn pattern on a doorway inside the second floor of an abandoned residence.

As with any pyrotechnic devices, inherent risks exist in their use and disposition. Smoke Bombs are no exception. Smoke Bombs can be currently used in Connecticut with a Special Effects permits issued by DESPP, by a pyrotechnicians who possess a valid Connecticut Certificate of Competency to Shoot Special Effects. The use of Smoke Bombs should be entrusted to trained, licensed, professionals who will ensure that the necessary precautions are taken to avoid unnecessary and preventable fires that result in tragedies.

Thank you for allowing us to provide comments on this proposed legislation.

Commissioner James Rovella and Sgt. Paul Makuc, Fire and Explosion Investigative Unit